

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

106th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 268

September 9, 1999, 2:01 p.m.
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INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS/Animal Leghold Traps and Snares

SUBJECT: Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2000 . . . H.R. 2466.
Stevens motion to table the Torricelli amendment No. 1571.

ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 64-32

SYNOPSIS: As amended by a committee substitute amendment, H.R. 2466, the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2000, will provide \$14.058 billion in new budget authority, which is \$239.9 million less than provided last year and \$1.208 billion less than requested.

The Torricelli amendment would add that none of the funds in this Act could be used "to authorize, permit, administer, or promote the use of any jawed leghold trap or neck snare in any unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System, except for the purpose of research, subsistence, conservation, or facilities protection."

Debate was limited by unanimous consent. Senator Stevens moved to table the amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

Those favoring the motion to table contended:

This amendment will make very good politics in urban areas on the East Coast, where people look at predators as cuddly pets, but it would cause environmental harm and would devastate many rural communities, particularly Native American communities in Alaska. It would ban the private use of leghold traps based on the claims that they are indiscriminate, that they are cruelly misused, and that there are acceptable alternatives. Each of those claims is wrong.

The United States has vast tracts, 77 million acres in total, of wildlife refuge land. That acreage has been set aside to protect endangered species. Within those refuges, many species are in danger from predators that are not endangered, including predators that are not native to those refuges. In California, for instance, several species of birds that are on the verge of extinction are quickly

(See other side)

YEAS (64)			NAYS (32)		NOT VOTING (4)	
Republicans (47 or 90%)	Democrats (17 or 39%)		Republicans (5 or 10%)	Democrats (27 or 61%)	Republicans (3)	Democrats (1)
Abraham	Hatch	Baucus	Fitzgerald	Akaka	Chafee- ²	Moynihan- ²
Allard	Helms	Bayh	Roth	Biden	McCain- ²	
Ashcroft	Hutchinson	Bingaman	Smith, Bob (I)	Boxer	Murkowski- ²	
Bennett	Hutchison	Breaux	Smith, Gordon	Bryan		
Bond	Inhofe	Conrad	Specter	Byrd		
Brownback	Jeffords	Daschle		Cleland		
Bunning	Kyl	Dorgan		Dodd		
Burns	Lott	Edwards		Durbin		
Campbell	Lugar	Feingold		Feinstein		
Cochran	Mack	Hollings		Graham		
Collins	McConnell	Inouye		Harkin		
Coverdell	Nickles	Johnson		Kennedy		
Craig	Roberts	Kerrey		Kerry		
Crapo	Santorum	Kohl		Lautenberg		
DeWine	Sessions	Landrieu		Levin		
Domenici	Shelby	Leahy		Lieberman		
Enzi	Snowe	Lincoln		Mikulski		
Frist	Stevens			Murray		
Gorton	Thomas			Reed		
Gramm	Thompson			Reid		
Grams	Thurmond			Robb		
Grassley	Voinovich			Rockefeller		
Gregg	Warner			Sarbanes		
Hagel				Schumer		
				Torricelli		
				Wellstone		
				Wyden		

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

being wiped out by red foxes and feral cats, neither of which are native. The Fish and Wildlife Service, as a conservation measure, uses trapping and other means to control the populations of predators. It is greatly assisted in that effort by private trappers. Private trappers typically live in lower-income, rural areas. In the continental United States, trapping is often used by ranchers to protect livestock, especially from coyotes. A large percentage of trappers live in remote, Native Alaskan villages where the only work available for a large part of the year is from trapping. Some environmental groups, such as the Izaak Walton League, support such management; more extreme groups oppose it and are willing to accept extinctions of species if those extinctions are caused by other animals.

Our colleagues, in this debate and in their amendment, have thrown around extremely suspect statistics and have made claims that are just not valid. For instance, they have said that leghold traps catch a species other than the ones targeted 80 percent to 90 percent of the time. Those of us from the West who have used traps certainly have always done much better, and we know of no trapper who has ever had that type of poor results. The size, location, tension, bait, scent, screening, and seasonal timing can and are all varied to target specific animals. Further, when a predator is killed, countless other animals that would have been killed by it, including endangered species, are saved. Our colleagues have also said that most trapping is done with other types of traps than the ones they would ban. The truth is that the Federal Government is responsible for 85 percent of all trapping in America, it traps for conservation purposes, and it uses the traps our colleagues would ban in the vast majority of cases. Our colleagues tell us that other, more humane types of traps can be used; in some cases, yes, in others, no. Coyotes and red fox are too smart to walk into cage traps. Conibear traps freeze in Alaska.

In defending their amendment, our colleagues have said that they have drawn it very narrowly. They have added a number of exemptions, including for subsistence trappers. They have made clear in this debate they think a subsistence trapper is someone who traps for food. However, subsistence activities usually are defined as natural resource activities at which someone makes less than \$10,000 per year. Thousands of people trap for pelts. In effect, the Torricelli amendment would permit the use of leghold traps and snares by anyone as long as the pelts were not sold. The economic effects on many low-income communities from that ban, especially many Native Alaskan communities that have no other source of income for much of the year, would be extreme. For the Government this ban would also be costly--it would take another 1,000 employees to reduce predator populations on refuges if private trapping were stopped. The Director of the National Wildlife Service (NWS), Wayne Regelin, is a 30-year career employee of the NWS. He understands the importance of continuing current trapping practices and has written us in strong opposition to this amendment. Interior Secretary Babbitt later tried to overrule that expert opinion by saying that the Interior Department would take no position on the amendment; we view that as a political statement in contrast to the expert view from the Wildlife Service.

When animals are trapped and killed they are going to feel pain. If predators in refugee areas are not killed, the other animals they kill will also feel pain. People in urban States in the East tend to look at fox, coyotes, and other "cute" species as they look at their own pets and are upset at the idea of those animals being caught in traps. Their heartstrings can be pulled easily by a call to ban the "cruel" use of leghold traps. If those traps are banned, the result will be economic disaster for communities that rely heavily on trapping for income, greater costs for the Government to manage refuges, and greater losses of endangered species. Senators who vote against this amendment are wrongly going to be labeled as being in favor of cruelty to animals. We urge our colleagues to take that unjust criticism and, in the interests of sound refuge management, to oppose the Torricelli amendment.

Those opposing the motion to table contended:

This vote should be one of the easiest votes Senators cast this year. Steel-jaw leghold traps are cruel relics that should have been banned long ago. Any animal that steps in them, whether the target species or another species altogether, is likely to have its leg instantly broken. The animal must then wait, in pain, until the trapper finally appears to kill it. We know our colleagues say that trappers should check their lines daily, and we know that trappers have adopted a voluntary code of ethics, but some disreputable trappers may take as long as a week to return. In many cases an animal will gnaw off its own leg to escape. These traps act like landmines; they will catch any animals that stray over them. Cats, dogs, bald eagles, and all other types of animals have been caught. According to the a 1989 study by Tomas and Forbes from the fourth Eastern Wildlife Damage Control proceedings, 11 non-targeted animals are trapped for every 1 targeted animal. These traps are so cruel that 88 other countries have already banned them. Those countries recognize that better alternatives are available. For instance, there are traps that kill animals instantly rather than leaving them waiting in pain for a trapper to return. We understand that many Senators believe that there are some legitimate purposes for the use of leghold traps and snares, such as conservation, livestock protection, and the preservation of subsistence gathering cultures. We disagree with our colleagues, but in the spirit of compromise, we have added exemptions for those purposes. However, we draw the line at using these cruel traps for commercial purposes. At a minimum, people should not be allowed to use this inhumane trapping method in order to profit from the sale of the pelts of the animals they catch. The Torricelli amendment would enact only this bare minimum ban. We urge our colleagues to support it.